

**WEARE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
MINUTES
JUNE 26, 2007
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In attendance this evening was: John Ciampi, Andrea Alderman, George Malette, and Pat Myers.

Vice chair Alderman called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

Minutes of May 22, 2007 – The members reviewed the minutes of last month's meeting and no changes were made. George made motion to accept the minutes as written, and John 2nd. All voted in favor, with one abstention (Andrea), and the motion carries.

Hall Property – Andrea addressed the two changes to the Hall Purchase and Sales Agreement notably that Ms. Hall didn't want her address on the P&S Agreement, and she requested an environmental waiver included in her file to insure her as blameless if any environmental indiscretions are encountered on her land after she releases the property.

Bailey and Pinard – They have appraisals lined up for August, and Scott Heath will be handling these.

Hawkes Property – Steve has an appraisal lined up for July, and Scott Dickman will be handling this. Unfortunately, as related by Andrea, LCHIP funding for this land contact has been denied. However, George countered by stating according to the NH Preservation Alliance both State houses have agreed to fund LCHIP for \$12 million dollars. Additionally, a \$25.00 surcharge on the recording of deeds is also earmarked to fund the LCHIP program, taking effect next year.

Steiner – Andy Fulton and Pat Myers executed a thorough site walk on this property, and Pat commented this land harbored valuable timber, especially pine. The property also included several wetlands, including a picturesque brook. This property connects with other open space land, including the Hoit Mill conservation area, and the open space of the Durgin subdivision. Andy described a section of the Durgin piece as having indications of a hummock, formed ages ago. Pat reported a dam on Huse Brook, near the Steiner Property, which had given way during the past spring flooding.

Some general discussion ensued concerning the properties surrounding the Steiner piece, to which Pat commented she feels the Steiner property has "incredible value [in relation to its location] with these adjacent properties". Talk drifted to the topic of "best methods" of protecting conservation properties, to which George commented he would like this topic presented at the annual NHAAC fall workshop- for instance, how to determine if it is more viable for a Conservation Commission to own land outright or to be under the umbrella of a land trust; private ownership, etc.

Pat revealed to the Committee that Mr. Steiner is starting to become interested in developing a plan for his property, and he would like to know what the plans of the OSC are so that he can go ahead and begin his planning. Pat stated he seems conservation minded and she feels he may be willing to make some kind of charitable donation. Also, Pat feels he may consider delaying this land transaction if the Town cannot provide sufficient and timely funding. Pat mentioned a bond

consideration may be applicable if need be. Andrea chimed that the properties being considered for conservation be prioritized, and the challenge will be to discern ways to keep prospective parties interested while the funding mechanisms are being set up. Andrea suggested appeasing Mr. Steiner with an official letter saying the Committee has voted in favor of support of purchasing his property as soon as funds are available, and certifying this decision with an official vote. Pat stated this suggestion certainly has its merits, and George added the next step should be moving forward with an appraisal. Since no one to date has met Mr. Steiner face to face, Pat suggested setting up a rendezvous with him in the near future. At this point, George expressed his wonderment as to why more perspective sellers don't take advantage of available bargain sales to qualify for tax abatements. Pat responded that lands trusts often caution environmental groups to proceed carefully down this path since each situation is different, and it is very important the paperwork is handled properly. Pat advised to first coordinate with land conservation experts such as Margaret Watkins and Paul Doscher before proceeding on this path. Pat wrapped up the Steiner segment by volunteering to contact Mr. Steiner this week to get a fix on his current stand concerning his property.

Oliphant Update – At this juncture of the meeting, George pointed out that as a reminder, the Tom Oliphant campaign is a done deal. Andrea proclaimed a gracious “thank you” to Mike Boyko for his patience and perseverance in culminating this land transaction with Mr. Oliphant.

Mike McKeivitt – John updated the Committee on this land contact by relating he tried to contact Mr. McKeivitt, but, as Mike lives in Hawaii part of the year and hasn't yet returned, John left a message with the house sitter asking her if she would ask Mike his future intentions concerning his Chipmunk Falls property. Mr. McKeivitt is due to return on Thursday, June 28. John relayed to the Committee that, as heard through the grapevine, Mike is asking \$50,000.00 for his 16 acres, mainly because of a viable potential timber harvest as quoted by Mike's appraiser (unknown at this time). Pat wondered if a timber cut can be taken off the purchase price. John suggested having Steve Najjar make a professional evaluation of this situation. Pat suggested we negotiate for the unbuildable portion of the property, about 13 acres, which is wet, and rocky but has conservation value nevertheless as it harbors numerous and varied wildlife species, has timber potential, and Dustin Brook flows through the parcel.

Silvia Pope – Located on Flanders Memorial Drive, this parcel needs to be site walked. Andrea felt it would be best to arrange the walk via e-mail exchanges which would probably happen after the 16th of July.

Miscellaneous Land Contacts – Pat had offered to contact a Mr. Ware who has a small parcel on Twin Bridge Rd, but who has now decided he does not want to part with it after receiving his latest tax statement. Pat has also offered to contact a Mr. Erickson on Poor Farm Rd., but to date has not been able to do so.

Funding - Andrea revealed that Chairman Najjar is considering a possible bond issue, or at least initiating dialogue on the subject, and will try to determine how supportive Committee members on this topic are. The bond would be earmarked for multiple properties, and they would be outlined individually. John chimed that the worst case scenario in seeking a bond would be the voters “just saying no”. George suggested making contact with LCHIP to determine when the next round of proposals can be submitted. George added that the Town seems to be getting its fiscal act together which may help win over citizenry support in sponsoring more dollars for conservation. Pat wondered if it would impair the cause of the OSC if a bond were requested and subsequently rejected

by the legislative body thus harnessing negative fallout affecting future financial requests; George replied that it would not if the Committee developed a studied, circumspect and detailed plan, executed a careful analysis of the appraisals, and in general developed an acceptable package to present to the town voters. George feels that the Committee should move ahead on ideas, and if necessary, make needed adjustments to the overall plans as they are being developed.

Pat inquired about the value of the Conservation Fund and Andrea replied that Tina assured her she would provide the latest tally before the next OSC meeting. However, Pat pointed out that the Committee should rightly receive a monthly statement from the bank or some other prearrangement of keeping the Committee financially updated on a regular basis. The Committee collectively agreed it should not be necessary to frequently goad Tina or other Town employees for this information since they are in reality an extra layer between the Committee and the actual cradle of financial data. Pat added that in the past the Committee received a bank statement delineating monetary transactions and periodic interest earned, and additionally, it received a form signed by the BOS authorizing transfer of funds from the General Fund to the Conservation Fund. John asked which bank is handling the Conservation Fund to which Pat responded "I don't know". The Committee wondered why the account statement hasn't been received from the bank, and George theorized perhaps the accounting must go through another (unspecified) Town department and subsequently not being forwarded to the Conservation Commission nor Open Space Committee. George informed the Committee that Merry Rice will be getting a new computer and is expected to update and maintain the Town website. John commented having someone keeping the website current is important because the minutes of the OSC haven't been posted in almost a year. George added, as an aside, that the Town minutes, as voted by the State Legislature, need to be made accessible within 5 business days instead of the previous 144 hour time frame. However, George noted the timeframe for non-public minutes is still 72 hours.

Agricultural Planning and Preservation Committee - George conveyed to the Committee an issue concerning the Town's Agricultural Planning and Preservation Committee (APPC), of which he is a member. He reported the APPC is working on the wording of its mission statement, and once finalized this statement will be sent to the OSC and CC, as well as other departments, so that they can provide their input. The Committee's initial purpose is to identify rural agriculture lands in Town noting various criteria such as soil types, local and State significance, large tracts of undeveloped land, land worthy of being used for agriculture, and finally, forest tracts. Once this research is established, George continued, the owners will be contacted to determine their needs and wants. Additionally, the Committee will seek to protect those who farm the land; for instance, addressing complaints relating to foul odors, loud animal/machinery noise, etc. The Committee could also establish a permanent Agricultural Commission which would consider all things agricultural, including, but not limited to, buying local goods, promoting agriculture, and so forth. George hopes the wording of the finalized mission statement will facilitate interaction with the other Town departments. Other possibilities of the perceived Commission could be to educate farmers about conserving their land under the various types of easements, and to coordinate activities so the members can work together for a common goal.

Heritage Committee - Another Committee being planned, as related by George, is the Heritage Committee. There are currently 6 volunteers assigned to this nascent organization. George reported that, according to statute, a certain amount of its funding can be from the current use change tax receipts. Explaining the framework of this committee, George pointed out if a building has any historical connectivity, it would become a candidate for the Heritage Commission.

Scenic Byway – George also reported on a Scenic Byway Plan currently being considered. It will begin on Rt. 114 on the Goffstown town line, up to Rt. 77 to the Congregational Church where it will bear right and continue to Dunbarton. This scenic byway was developed by SNHPC and State resources.

General Land Contact Discussion – Pat was a little concerned about the possible difficulty in prioritizing the various land contacts; however, Andrea relayed that connectivity would be a reasonable place to begin. Discussion then ensued on the importance of writing site walk reports which can be helpful as a quick and easy reference, for instance, if a new housing development were threatening an environmentally sensitive area, a written report could be useful in adjusting those plans. Andrea commented if a whole slate of properties were voted on in March, and the entire package failed, at least the voting public now would be informed what the OSC is trying to accomplish. George asked if all the properties being considered *should* be voted on aggregately – maybe better to vote individually so that there would be a more probable chance that at least some properties will pass, even though others may fail. Pat proposed some attention should be applied to marketing the goals and objectives of the OSC so that voters are made aware of its intentions, perhaps making it somewhat more facilitating to pass a bond or an important vote. Pat suggested using slogans or catchy phrases, employed by some other conservation agencies, such as “25% in 25 years” for example. Pat added this could help convince the voters that a long term project would be worthwhile and in the best interests of the Town. Pat pointed out Andy Fulton’s (Conservation Commission chair) idea to designate the Chipmunk Falls area as the Dustin Brook Watershed Area, would help townspeople feel a greater sense of attachment to a particular piece of property. Andrea advocated focusing on a certain section of Town, establishing a strategy, while stressing the importance of connectivity to critical conservation lands. George related that preserving natural resources is the most cost effective thing the Town can do. Pat stated we need to know where the most favorable sites that development can occur without interfering with the natural environment. John mentioned the Natural resource Inventory would be valuable here, and he asked how it was maturing, to which Andrea answered the Committee is waiting for the next influx of funds from the Current Use Change Tax, and the cost will be around \$20,000.00. John asked when the current use funds paid to the Town is made, and George replied “as the lots are sold”.

George mentioned that the OSC should be able to examine the final version of the subdivision plans, so the Committee has some way of monitoring the open space lands. To date, the OSC/CC does not receive the final site plans as approved by the Planning Board.

Adjournment – George made motion to adjourn, and pat 2nd. All voted in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted as a True Record,

John Ciampi
Recording Secretary

CC : Town Clerk
BOS
Files
Tina Pelletier

